

Wednesday, May 19, 1999

Duxbury Clipper

39

July Opening for New Marine Mammal Rehab Site

Duxbury will soon be the destination for marine mammal EMT's and staff carting everything from dolphins to sea turtles for treatment.

The New England Aquarium's planned new Marine Mammal Rehabilitation facility at Battelle scheduled to open in July will serve the northeast coast as a premier rehab site.

Aquarium officials said the site on Duxbury's waterfront was chosen because of an exciting new partnership with Battelle, the locally based international research organization specializing in technology-based environmental consulting services.

Mike Connors, N.E. Aquarium Vice President for Programs, said this week N.E. Aquarium officials are extremely excited about the project which begins construction next week.

"Many marine animals that strand on beaches have to be euthanized because there are no local treatment facilities available. We have EMT's and an ambulance and staff but up until now we had no central rehab location. This will enable us to treat marine mammals and release many back in the environment."

Coming to the aid of stranded, sick and injured marine animals has been a prior-

ity of the New England Aquarium since 1968. Since that time, Aquarium staff and volunteers respond to thousands of stranding emergencies and successfully rehabilitate mammals including whales, dolphins, seals and turtles. The nearest treatment facility is currently in Mystic, CT.

Connors said, many times marine mammals get stuck in Cape Cod Bay and sometimes will get into salt marsh areas or the beach near Wellfleet. Such mammals as sea turtles, dolphins, porpoises, and seals often end up on Cape Cod shores.

With space in short supply at the Aquarium's Central Wharf site in Boston, the need

for an off-site facility is clear, he said.

The new New England Aquarium Marine Mammal Rehabilitation Center will have two pools: one 2,000-gallon critical care pool and one 29,600-gallon rehabilitation pool. There will also be small kitchen and office space as well as shower facilities for staff and volunteer support. This facility will be able to accommodate a mother and calf pair of dolphins or three harbor porpoises at a time.

The new center will also be a resource for education and research. Visitors to the New England Aquarium in Boston will learn about the off-site re-

habilitation efforts at the Aquarium Medical Center, a permanent, public exhibit dedicated to helping people understand veterinary care procedures for both collection animals and rescued animals. Public access of the Duxbury facility will be limited due to quarantine, safety and health concerns.

Partial funding has been provided by the Kohlberg Foundation and a private donor. A fundraising campaign will be launched this summer to raise an additional \$75,000 to complete the new facility. The total cost to create it is about \$200,000.